

# Garden Spiders

*Argiopidae*



Historically, garden spiders have been considered as beneficial, in most cases living in fields away from man's habitat and feeding on insects. In recent years — with the growth and spread of cities — spiders have taken on a more significant role. They now appear to have adapted themselves to the newly created environments of suburban backyards where, for one reason or another, they invade homes. In most cases the spider will die within the building because of insufficient insect food supply.

Most spiders are not normally aggressive, but may retaliate if hurt by being sat on, picked up, or rolled on in bed. A physician should be consulted if any bite symptoms persist. The spider should be captured, if possible and brought to the doctor for identification.

## Habits

A variety of garden spiders may invade a yard where they may weave intricately beautiful webs, tunnels, or messy strands of silk. Access to a home, in most cases, will be via vegetation or other materials around doors or windows. They also live around vents or crawl holes, but usually in the immediate vicinity of an entrance where moisture and the insect population exists.

# Black Widow Spiders

*Latrodectus mactans*



Black widow spiders are so-called because the female of the species, if sufficiently hungry, will sometimes feed on the much smaller male. The bite of the black widow on humans can be dangerous, particularly to the young, the old or the ill. In all cases, a physician should be consulted. The spider should be captured (if possible) and brought to the doctor for identification.

## Description

The adult black widow, including the legs, is about one inch or more across. The round pea-like abdomen may be 1/4 inch or more in diameter. The fused head-thorax area is smaller than the abdomen. The legs are wiry and brittle in appearance. The entire color is usually shiny black. In most cases, there will be an orangish to red hourglass on the belly.

## Habits

Black widows spin their irregular but strong webs in dark, secluded areas. The silken egg case which contains from two to nine hundred eggs, is about as large as a pea and is attached to the web. The black widow guards the egg case aggressively, if necessary. The female, who often hangs upside down on the web, will quickly disappear to a hiding place if disturbed. Egg cases should be thoroughly crushed.

## Control

The basic control of any spider problem is sanitation, including removal of untidy debris, piled lumber and other hiding places. Another aid in control is to cut back vegetation from a window or other entrance which would allow the spiders to enter the home.

The black widow is probably the most dangerous spider in southern California and should be eliminated whenever possible. The first step in black widow control is sanitation or the removal of hiding places. Piles of debris, brush, or other materials are favorite spots for the black widow to spin her web.

## Insecticides

Where sanitation is not possible — such as in garages, outbuildings or vegetation — insecticide sprays or dusts should be applied thoroughly. Many insecticides will kill the black widow and other spiders, and can provide a residual effect for several weeks. Insecticides may be in an aerosol spray can or as a concentrate in a bottle. In all cases, the words “black widow spider” or “spiders” should be on the label of the container. Follow label directions regarding the use of the material. Insecticides are available at nurseries, garden supply, or hardware stores. If it is necessary to cover a large area, use a garden hose sprayer to apply the insecticide and not an aerosol can.

### CAUTION

Handle pesticides with care, and follow the instructions on the label. Apply only in amounts specified. Do not use near open flame or exposed foods. Clean food preparation areas after use of pesticides. Store in original containers and out of reach of children and pets. Dispose of container when empty so that they pose no hazard to humans and animals.



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